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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

In the 15 years since the Beijing Platform for Action was agreed and twice reaffirmed by the General Assembly, progress has been made in many areas towards improving the situation of women across the world. The Millennium Development Goals also include a particular focus on aspects of progress for women and children. One area, however, which remains relatively neglected, is the practical recognition and support for unpaid caregiving and related work, the majority of which is still carried out by women.

In Europe, despite the increase in women's hours of paid work, there has not been an equal increase in men's participation in unpaid work. Although European men are carrying out more hours of unpaid work, their contribution as a percentage of total unpaid work carried out has actually fallen since the Platform for Action was drafted.

Promoting women's economic independence is one of the aims of the Platform for Action; employment is recognized as one path towards this goal. Recognition and support for unpaid work will, the organization contends, both reward those who undertake it and provide an incentive for those who are not currently engaged in it. Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer member organizations, for example, are regularly contacted by fathers who are looking for ways to fund periods of full- and part-time care for their own children. Recognition for this work will raise the status of both the work and the family caregiver. The skills and competencies acquired during periods of unpaid work should also be more widely recognized to counteract the negative perceptions associated with unpaid caregiving.

Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer notes that the ability to develop and implement robust economic and social policy will be improved by the inclusion of unpaid work in the gross domestic product and other relevant statistics. The value of unpaid work is estimated to represent between approximately 30 per cent to 50 per cent of a country's gross domestic product. More importantly, for care outcomes, the ability of families to balance their employment and family responsibilities can be built into policy from the bottom up rather than forcing people to juggle care for dependent family members on the margins of paid work.

Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer therefore calls on the States Members of the United Nations in their annual ministerial review to fulfil the commitments they have made to implement the plans contained in the Beijing Platform for Action to account for unremunerated work in relevant United Nations and national statistics, including in satellite gross domestic product accounts and regular time-use surveys and to provide access to lifelong learning and recognition for skills and competencies acquired during periods of unremunerated care and voluntary community work.